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Identifying the Flight Feathers of the Large Macaws

Identification Guides for Wildlife Law Enforcement No. 4

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The large macaws consist of six species that remain widespread in the wild and are frequently kept in captivity, as well as two additional species that are extremely rare both in the wild and in captivity. Two of the large macaw species are CITES-II listed; all others are CITES I.

All of the large macaws possess large and brightly colored flight feathers that are frequently used in crafted items. This Identification Guide summarizes methods for identifying the flight feathers of the six species of large macaws that are regularly encountered by wildlife law enforcement personnel.

<u>Species</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>CITES</u>	<u>Alternate Name</u>
Hyacinth Macaw	(<i>Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus</i>)	I	
Scarlet Macaw	(<i>Ara macao</i>)	I	
Great Green Macaw	(<i>Ara ambigua</i>)	I	Buffon's Macaw
Military Macaw	(<i>Ara militaris</i>)	I	
Blue-and-Yellow Macaw	(<i>Ara ararauna</i>)	II	Blue-and-Gold Macaw
Red-and-Green Macaw	(<i>Ara chloroptera</i>)	II	Green-winged Macaw
<u>Very rare species, unlikely to be encountered:</u>			
Indigo Macaw	(<i>Anodorhynchus leari</i>)	I	Lear's Macaw
Blue-throated Macaw	(<i>Ara glaucogularis</i>)	I	Caninde Macaw

Step 1: Sort out macaw flight feathers based on color of undersides

Underside Black: Hyacinth Macaw [and the very rare Indigo Macaw]

Underside Red: Scarlet Macaw and Red-and-Green Macaw – go to Step 2

Underside Yellow: Blue-and-Yellow Macaw, Military Macaw, and Great Green Macaw
[and the very rare Blue-throated Macaw] – go to Step 2

***Note:** this sorting works for both wing and tail feathers*

Step 2: Compare colors of both feather undersides and uppersides

Underside Red: Scarlet Macaw and Red-and-Green Macaw

If: Upper wing royal blue;
Under wing red with definite yellowish tinge;
Central tail pure red, or with pink or violet tip on upper side:
→ **Scarlet Macaw**

If: Upper wing turquoise blue;
Under wing red without definite yellowish tinge;
Central tail red with blue tip:
→ **Red-and-Green Macaw**

***Note:** the shorter lateral tail feathers of both Scarlet and Red-and-Green Macaws have blue on uppersides and cannot be reliably distinguished without reference standards*

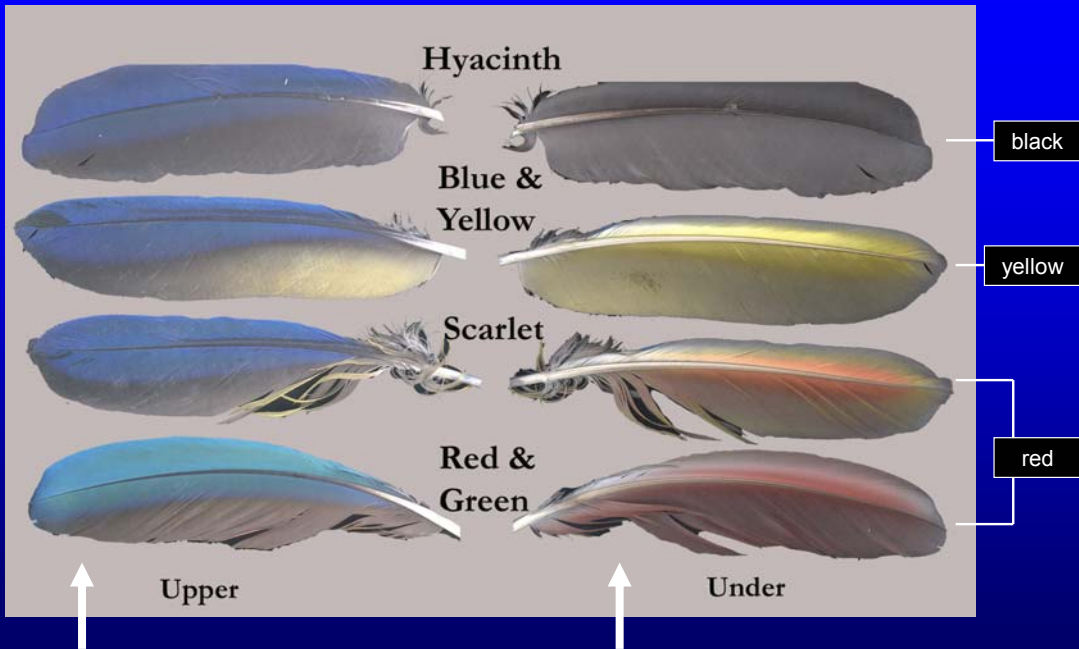
Underside Yellow: Blue-and-Yellow, Blue-throated, Great Green, and Military Macaw

If: Upper wing royal blue;
Upper tail blue with no orange, red, or yellow:
→ **Blue-and-Yellow Macaw** [and the very rare Blue-throated Macaw]

If: Upper wing turquoise or greenish blue;
Upper tail blue at tip with area of orange, red, or yellow below:
→ **Military Macaw or Great Green Macaw**

***Note:** Military and Great Green Macaws cannot be reliably distinguished without reference standards. Both are CITES I.*

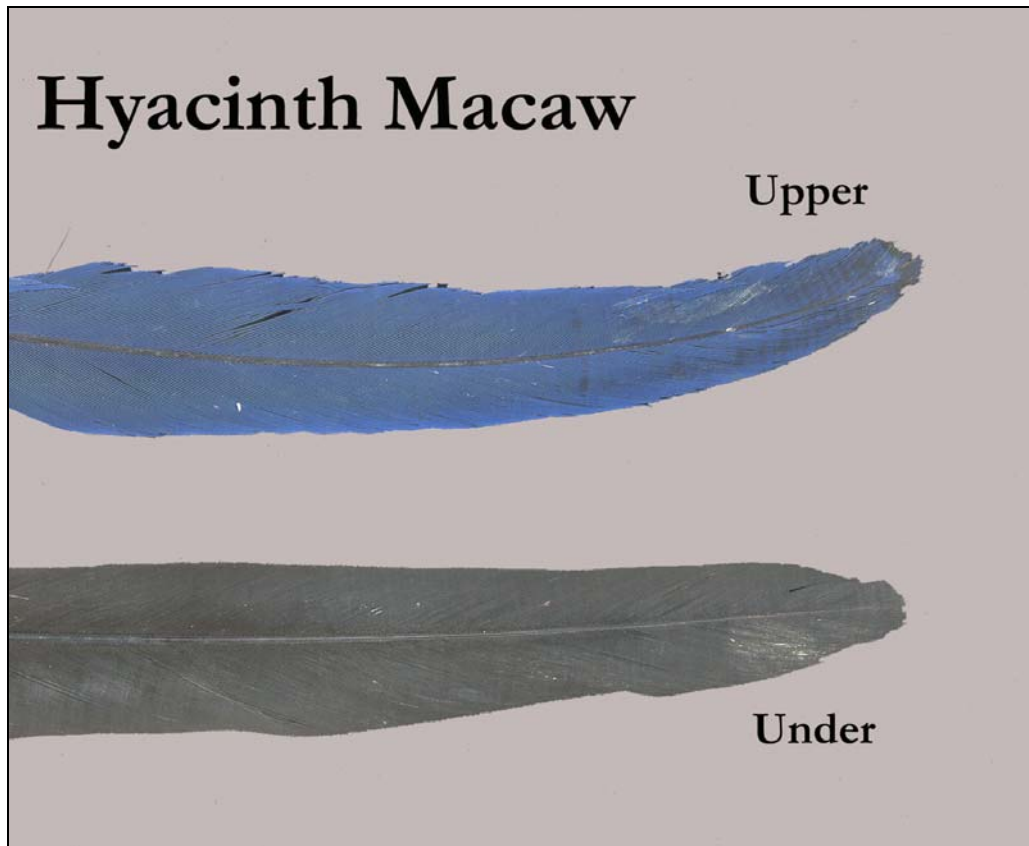
Macaw Wing Feathers



Uppersides blue in all species

Undersides vary in color

Macaw Central Tail Feathers: Underside Black



Macaw Central Tail Feathers: Underside Red

Scarlet Macaw



Upper



Under

Red-and-Green Macaw



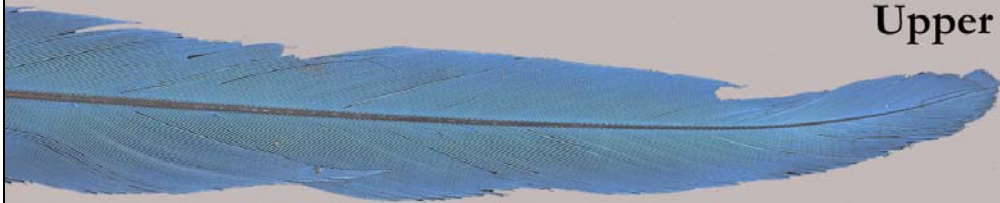
Upper



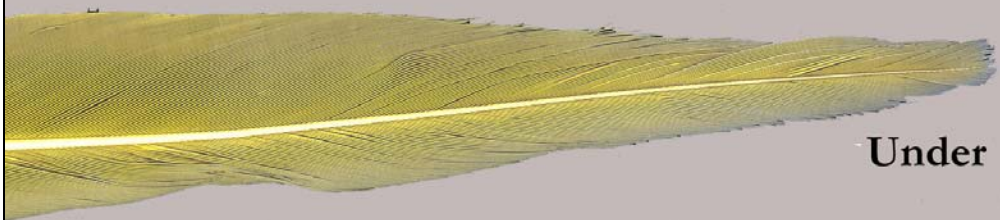
Under

Macaw Central Tail Feathers: Underside Yellow

Blue-and-Yellow Macaw

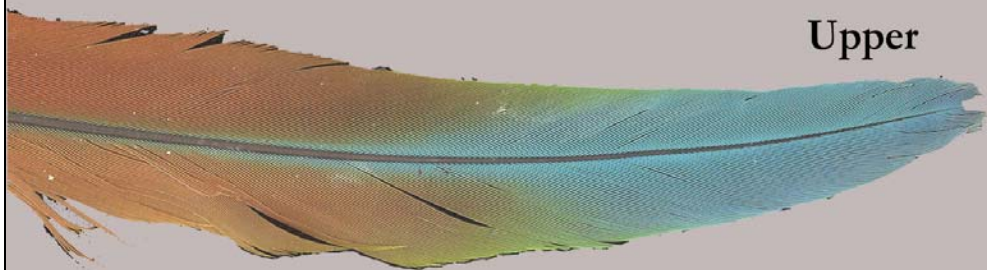


Upper



Under

Military Macaw



Upper



Under

Macaw Wings: Upper- and Undersides

